INTRODUCTION TO THE LANDSCAPE ELEMENT

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1.1 Purpose of the Landscape Element

Chapters 1 through 5 make up the Landscape Element of the Management Program and set forth design goals, criteria, and an implementation process to guide efforts for landscaping the Iron Horse Corridor in Contra Costa County as a joint-use facility. The purpose of this element is to ensure design of safe amenities and aesthetic landscape improvements which create a cohesive landscape character along the corridor. The design goals and criteria can be applied in the design of small areas or extended lengths of the corridor. Both public and private entities interested in improving the corridor are required to use these criteria to guide design and implementation of improvements. The County Public Works Department will use these criteria to evaluate and approve proposed projects. The Landscape Element was prepared by a consultant team with technical support from County staff and public input from a community participation process. The document was developed under the guidance of the Iron Horse Corridor Advisory Committee which reviewed, revised, and ratified the final document.



1.2 Summary of the Planning Process

The staff and Advisory Committee jointly selected a consultant team consisting of a facilitator, landscape architect, and economist, to prepare the *Landscape Element* of the management program. The consultant team initiated its work in March 1998.

The Advisory Committee agreed to work by consensus on reaching agreement on the material in this report. The consultant team, with County staff guidance, gathered information, prepared text and illustrations, and conducted a community participation process to prepare this report. The process consisted of six phases:

- 1) Review and collect data regarding the corridor.
- 2) Inventory physical conditions of the corridor.
- 3) Conduct a public participation process to gather community ideas and concerns.
- 4) Prepare design goals, landscape criteria, and alternative landscape treatments.
- 5) Identify funding strategies for use in the Finance Element.
- 6) Prepare administrative draft report for public review; and a final report for approval by the Board of Supervisors.

The consultant team prepared draft working papers for review, discussion, and approval by the Advisory Committee. Each work product was revised until the full committee could reach consensus on its contents. The Committee met regularly from January 1998 through April 2000. The committee will continue to meet to complete the other elements of the Management Program and to provide input to the County on implementation.

The Committee had as one of its key principles, the desire to incorporate the community's ideas and needs in preparing the landscape element of the management program. Accordingly, the consultant team, with staff and Committee guidance, conducted two community workshops and provided an interactive Web site. The public workshops, held on May 27, 1998 and June 3, 1998, were widely publicized through letters to adjacent property owners, notices posted on the Iron Horse Trail, and promotion through the Web site. The workshops were attended by approximately 55 residents. The Web site provided several opportunities for comment including a Virtual Workshop which allowed people to review and comment on the same material presented at the regular workshops.

Approximately 50 people provided comments via the Web site which are summarized in the appendix. Additionally, input was provided through approximately 50 public letters and through public participation at the Committee meetings.

1.3 How to Use the Landscape Element

This document describes existing conditions and provides design guidelines to guide future landscape improvements to the Iron Horse Corridor. This document is intended for use by the general public, local jurisdictions, and the County. The document is organized into six sections:

- 1 Introduction: This discusses the steps leading to development of the Iron Horse Corridor Management Program and the process used to develop this document.
- 2 Corridor Setting and Current Physical Conditions: This chapter describes the physical setting and qualities of the corridor using text and maps.
- 3 Design Goals and Guidelines: This chapter specifies goals and design guidelines to shape landscape and site amenity design. The goals address issues of overall design, landscaping, maintenance, site amenities such as benches and signs, and community involvement in corridor improvements.
- 4 Landscape Treatments and Cost Estimates: This includes suggested design solutions and design guidelines for different types of potential improvements.
- 5 Implementation Process: A process is proposed for the County to review and approve proposed projects emerging from the community and public agencies.

Appendices:

These include a copy of the Board Order dated July 22, 1997¹ initiating the Management Program, a summary of public comment, contact information for funding sources, a list of relevant resource documents, and utility company criteria for landscaping within various easements.

Two additional items were produced in conjunction with this document and are available from the County Public Works Department. They include a photograph inventory of the Iron Horse Corridor and the *Finance Element* which itemizes corridor maintenance costs and revenues and proposes a funding strategy for implementing design improvements.

County Board of Supervisors Action of July 22, 1997 to initiate the Southern Pacific Right-of-Way Management Program was approved unanimously.